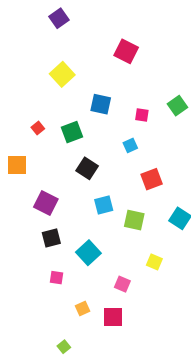


It is important to note that, for some cultures, more than two gender identities are recognized and that there may be a more appropriate identity that an individual prefers to use in conjunction with or instead of “trans.”

The term “Two-Spirit” is used by Indigenous peoples, but holds a variety of meanings depending on the community. The term “Two-Spirit” was included in this resource to respect that people may wish to claim a gender identity outside of norms defined through colonialism.

This handout is an excerpt from Celebrating Gender Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith, 2019 edition. For more information on this topic, search www.united-church.ca for “gender diversity.” The terms “trans,” “Two-Spirit,” “cisgender,” and so on are further explored in this resource.

To format this handout for photocopying and distribution, print or photocopy the pages double-sided and fold down the middle.



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

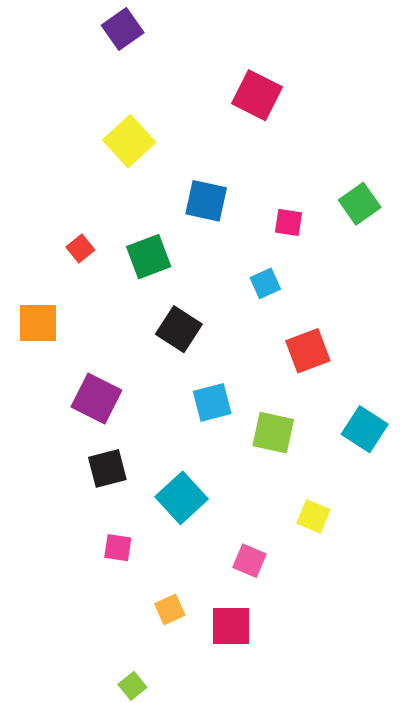


CELEBRATING TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE IN COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

A **HANDOUT** ON
GENDER IDENTITY AND
TRANS EXPERIENCES
FOR COMMUNITIES
OF FAITH

In communities of faith, all should feel loved and welcomed. Therefore, these spaces should challenge the hurtful messages trans and Two-Spirit people receive from the rest of society every day. This is why it is so important to commit to trans and Two-Spirit justice as a community of faith.

We live in a world that teaches us many hurtful assumptions about people who are trans and Two-Spirit. So it requires intentionality to help someone who is trans or Two-Spirit feel affirmed. This work will directly benefit individuals who are trans or Two-Spirit as well as family and friends of trans and Two-Spirit people. But remember, too, that when communities are created where everyone feels fully welcome, it benefits the entire community.



Here are some ways that you can engage in trans and Two-Spirit justice.

1 Uplift and affirm the experiences of trans and Two-Spirit folks.

Find ways to explicitly name trans and Two-Spirit people as children of God in liturgy. Use sermons to explore theologically how trans and Two-Spirit people are blessed members of the kingdom of God, and explore how trans and Two-Spirit experiences can influence someone spiritually.

2 Make sure that trans and Two-Spirit folks are given the space to speak for themselves.

As you engage in allyship, be sure to carefully consider the folks who are living visibly as trans and Two-Spirit in your community. Always give space for trans and Two-Spirit folks to express their needs and boundaries so that they feel safe and respected.

3 Encourage trans and Two-Spirit leadership in your community by giving them an opportunity to share their gifts.

Trans and Two-Spirit folks are not only gifts to their communities because of their presence and insight on gender. They also have many skills and gifts that they want to be invited to share. Take the time to get to know the trans/Two-Spirit folks in your community.

4 Create a trans-inclusive washroom policy.

Safe washrooms exist when communities are educated about gender and understand that all people have the right to choose the washroom that feels safest for them. For some trans and Two-Spirit folks, having a gender-neutral washroom is an important piece to feeling safe. However, it is also important to ensure that trans men and trans women can access gendered bathrooms while feeling safe and respected.

5 Use language that is inclusive of all genders.

The more you learn about trans and Two-Spirit experiences, the better you will become at using inclusive language. For example, phrases such as “ladies and gentleman” or “brothers and sisters” do not allow space for people who have non-binary gender identities. Try alternatives such as “folks,” “family,” or “siblings.” Trans and Two-Spirit inclusive language challenges the assumption that everyone is cisgender. For example, it does not assume that all women can give birth or that everyone lives as the same gender their whole life. Inclusive language should be part of all that your community engages in including your website, bulletins, Sunday school curriculum, liturgy, and conversations.

6 Learn how to support.

Make sure your pastoral care providers are educated about trans and Two-Spirit issues so that they can provide adequate support to trans and questioning individuals as well as their family and friends.

7 Offer ministry to trans/Two-Spirit folks beyond your community.

Do you have any resources you could offer to members of the trans and Two-Spirit communities? Networking with organizations that are engaged in trans or Two-Spirit activism is a great way to let people know of the resources and gifts your community of faith can share with others.

8 Review the current policies and resources that are being used in your community to ensure that the language and ethos are trans-affirming and trans-inclusive.

Are your marriage certificates and policy inclusive of all genders? Is gendered language used in baptism certificates? Are any educational resources on gender and/or sexuality outdated but still in circulation?